

Exploits of Elaine

Continued from Page 6

had leaned against the wall. As I turned, Craig happened to glance at me.

"For heaven's sake, Walter," I heard him exclaim. "What have you been up against?"

He fairly leaped at me and I felt him examining my shoulder where I had been leaning on the wall. Something on the paper had come off and left a mark on my shoulder. Craig looked puzzled from me at the wall.

"Arsenic!" he cried.

He whipped out a pocket lens and looked at the paper. "This heavy, fuzzy paper is fairly loaded with it, powdered," he reported.

Kennedy paced the room. Suddenly, pausing by the register, an idea seemed to strike him.

"Walter," he whispered, "come down cellar with me."

"Oh! Be careful!" cried Elaine, anxious for him.

"I will," he called back.

As he flashed his pocket lens' eye about his gaze fell on the electric meter. He paused before it. In spite of the fact that it was broad daylight, it was running. His face puckered.

"They are using no current at present in the house," he murmured, "yet the meter is running."

He continued to examine the meter. Then he began to follow the electric wires along. At last he discovered a place where they had been tampered with and tapped by other wires.

"The work of the Clutching Hand!" he muttered.

Eagerly he followed the wires to the furnace and around to the back. There they led right into a little water tank. Kennedy yanked them out. As he did so he pulled something with them.

"Two electrodes the villain placed there," he exclaimed, holding them up triumphantly for me to see.



Kennedy Discovers the Secret of the Poisoned Room.

"Y-yes," I replied, dubiously, "but what does it all mean?"

"Why, don't you see? Under the influence of the electric current the water was decomposed and gave off oxygen and hydrogen. The free hydrogen passed up the furnace pipe and combining with the arsenic in the wall paper formed the deadly arsenuretted hydrogen."

He cast the whole improvised electrolysis apparatus on the floor and dashed up the cellar steps.

"I've found it!" he cried, hurrying into Elaine's room. "It's in this room—a deadly gas—arsenuretted hydrogen."

He tore open the windows.

"Have her moved," he shouted to Aunt Josephine. "Then have a vacuum cleaner go over every inch of wall, carpet and upholstery."

Standing beside her, he breathlessly explained his discovery. "That wall paper has been loaded down with arsenic, probably Paris green or Schweinfurth green, which is acetate of copper. Every minute you are here you are breathing arsenuretted hydrogen. This Clutching Hand is a diabolical genius. Think of it—poisoned wall paper!"

No one said a word. Kennedy reached down and took the two Clutching Hand messages Elaine had received. "I shall want to study these notes, more, too," he said, holding them up to the wall at the head of the bed as he flashed his pocket lens at them. "You see, Elaine, I may be able to get something from studying the ink, the paper, the hand writing—"

Suddenly both leaped back, with a cry.

Their faces had been several inches apart. Something had whizzed between them and literally impaled the two notes on the wall.

Down the street, on the roof of a carriage house, back of a neighbor's might have been seen the uncouth figure of the shabby South American Indian crouching behind a chimney and gazing intently at the Dodge house.

As Craig had thrown open Elaine's window and turned to Elaine the figure had crouched closer to the chimney.

Then with an uncanny determination, he slowly raised the blowgun to his lips.

I jumped forward, followed by Doctor Hayward, Aunt Josephine and Marie. Kennedy had a peculiar look as he pulled out from the wall a blowgun dart similar in every way to that which had killed Michael.

"Craig!" gasped Elaine, reaching up and laying her white hand on his arm in undisguised fear for him. "You—you must give up this chase for the Clutching Hand!"

"Give up the chase for the Clutching Hand?" he repeated in surprise. "Never! Not until either he or I is dead!"

There was both fear and admiration mingled in her look, as he reached down and patted her dainty shoulder encouragingly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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FINAL EPISODE of The Million Dollar Mystery

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Secret of the Million.

It will be remembered that Countess Olga had started up the stairs during the struggle between Braine and his captors. The police who had followed her were recalled to pursue one of the lesser rogues. This left Olga free for a moment. She had a glimpse of the door and saw the light of day and down as far as the landing.

Servan, the Russian agent, stood waiting for the taxicab to roll up to the porte cochere for himself, Braine and room. Norton had taken Florence by the hand and was leading her to the door. She was looking back over her shoulder at the man who had just saved her from the hands of the police. She was looking at the man who had just saved her from the hands of the police. She was looking at the man who had just saved her from the hands of the police.

Below they were all stunned by the suddenness of the shot. Instantly they sought the fallen man's side and a hasty examination gave them the opinion that the man was dead. Happily a doctor was on the way. Servan having given a call, as one of the Black Hundred had been badly wounded.

But what to do with that mad woman upstairs? Hargrave advised them to wait. The house was surrounded. She could not possibly escape save by one method, and perhaps that would be the best for her. Hargrave looked gravely at Norton as he offered this suggestion. The reporter understood, the millionaire was willing to give the woman a chance.

"And you are my father?" said Florence, still bewildered by the amazing events. "But I don't understand!" her gaze roving from the real Jones to the man who had just saved her.

"I don't doubt it, child," replied Hargrave. "I'll explain. When I hired Jones here, who is really Jeddson of Scotland Yard, I did so because we looked alike when shaven. It was Jeddson here who was covered by the balloon; it was Jeddson who returned the five thousand to Norton; it was Jeddson who was wounded in the arm; it was he who watched the doings of the Black Hundred and kept me reasonably well informed. I have guarded you, my child. Last night, unknown to you, I left, and the real Jones—for it is easier to call him Jones—took my place."

"And I never saw the difference!" exclaimed Florence.

"That is natural," smiled the father. "You were thinking of Norton here instead of me. Eh?"

"Well, why not? Here, Norton!" the millionaire took Florence's hand and placed it in the reporter's. "It seems that I've got to lose her after all. Kiss her, man; in heaven's name, kiss her!"

And Norton threw his arms around the girl and kissed her soundly, carelessly of the fact that he was kissing the man who had just saved her from the hands of the police.

Suddenly the policeman who had been standing by the side of Braine ran into the living room.

"He's alive!" Braine is alive! He just stirred!"

"What!" exclaimed Norton and Hargrave, in a single breath.

"Yes, sir! I saw his hands move. It's a good thing we sent for a doctor. He ought to be along here about now."

Even as he spoke the bell rang and they all surged into the hall, forgetting for the moment all about the million. Olga hadn't killed the man, then? The doctor knelt beside the stricken man and examined him. He shrugged.

"Will he live?"

"Certainly. A scalp wound that laid him out for a few moments. He'll be all right in a few days. He was lucky. A quarter of an inch lower and he'd have passed in his checks."

"Good!" murmured Servan. "So our friend will accompany me back to good Russia? Oh, we'll be kind to him during the journey. Have him taken to the hospital ward at the Temple. Now for the little lady upstairs."

A moment later Braine opened his eyes and the policeman assisted him to his feet. Servan with a nod ordered the police to help the wounded man to the taxicab, which had just arrived. Braine, now wholly conscious, flung back one look of hatred toward Hargrave; and that was the last either Florence or her father ever saw of Braine of the Black Hundred—a fine specimen of a man gone wrong through greed and an inordinate lust for revenge.

The policeman returned to Hargrave.

"It's pretty quiet upstairs," he suggested. "Don't you think, sir, that I'd better try that bedroom door again?"

"Well, if you must," assented Hargrave reluctantly. "But don't be rough with her if you can help it."

For Braine he had no sympathy. For eighteen years to have ridden and driven and sailed up and down the world, always confident that sooner or later that demon would find him! He had lost the childhood of his daughter, and now he was to lose her in her womanhood. And because of this implacable hatred the child's mother had died in the Petrograd prison fortress. But what an enemy the man had been! He, Hargrave, had needed all his wits constantly; he had never dared so to sleep except with one eye open. But in employing ordinary "brooks Braine had at length overreached himself, and now he must pay the penalty. The way of the transgressor is hard, and though this ancient saying looks dingy with the wear and tear of centuries, it still holds good.

But he felt sorry for the woman up above. She had loved not wisely but too well. Far better for her to be put an end to life. She would not live a year in the God-forsaken snows of Siberia.

"My kind father!" said Florence, as if she could read his thoughts.

"I had a hard time of it, my child. It was difficult to play the butler with you about. The times that I fought down the desire to sweep you up in my arms! But I kept an iron grip on that impulse. It would have imperiled you. In some manner it would have leaked out, and your life and mine wouldn't have been worth a button."

Florence threw her arms around him and held him tightly.

"That poor weak woman upstairs!" she murmured. "Can't they let her go?"

"No, dear. She has lost, and losers pay the stakes. That's life. Norton, you know who I was all the time, didn't you?"

"I did, Mr. Hargrave. There was a scar on the lobe of your ear; and secretly I had often wondered at the likeness between you and the real Jones. When I caught a glimpse of that ear then I knew what the game was. And I'll add you played it amazingly well. The one flaw in Braine's campaign was his hurry. He started the ball rolling before getting all the phases clearly established in his mind. He was a brave man anyhow."

"And do you think that you can lead Florence to the million?" asked Hargrave, smiling.

"For one thing, it is in her room and has always been there. It never was in the chest."

"Not bad, not bad," mused the father.

"But perhaps after all it will be best if you show it to her yourself."

"Just a little uncertain," jibed the millionaire.

"Absolutely certain. I will whisper in your ear where it is hidden." Norton leaned forward as Hargrave bent attentively.

"You've hit it," said the millionaire. "But how in the world did you guess it?"

"Because it was the last place anyone would look for it. I judged at the start that you'd hide it in just such a spot, in some place where you could always guard it and lay your hands on it quickly if needs said must."

"I'm mighty glad you were on my side," said Hargrave. "In a few minutes we'll go up and take a look over your packets of bills. There's a very unhappy young woman there at present."

"Is it in my room?" cried Florence. Hargrave nodded.

Meantime Countess Olga hovered between two courses: a brave attempt to escape by the window or to turn the revolver against her hand.

In either case there was nothing left in life for her. The man she loved was dead below, killed by her hand. She felt as though she was treading air in some fantastic nightmare. She could not go forward or backward, and her heels were always within reach of her pursuers.

So this was the end of things? The dreams she had had of going away with Braine to other climes, the happiness she had pictured, all mere chimeras! A sudden rage swept over her. She would escape, she would continue to play the game to the end. She would show them that she had been the man's mate, not his plant tool! She raised the window and slipped the policeman who had patiently been waiting for her. Instantly she closed the window at her temple. A quick clutch and the policeman had her by the wrist. She made one tigerish effort to free herself, shrugged and signified that she surrendered.

"I don't want to hurt you, miss," said the policeman, "but if you make any attempt to escape I'll have to put the handcuffs on you."

"I'll go quietly. What are you going to do with me?"